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ABSTRACT

An event such as congressional boundary redistricting, so ripe with political confrontation, provides a fertile ground for the profuse growth of political rhetoric. The traditional two-party political system, charged by the two well-developed adversarial philosophies, generates a highly charged environment with messages begging for analysis. After numerous unsuccessful attempts at using existing political rhetorical theories to analyze the rhetoric resulting from Ohio's reapportionment maneuvers, the necessity for a suitable theory resulted in the production, design, and emergence of a new political communication theory providing sufficient framework to analyze the unique rhetoric of redistricting. This theory, called "rhetorical illusionism," consists of seven fundamental principles which provide the framework. This paper presents the rhetoric of Ohio's redistricting analyzed through this theory. As a background canvas, the paper invokes the ideas and practices of the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer, the noted "illusionism" artist, pointing out that this artistic tool, illusionism, has direct application to the art of rhetoric, and more specifically to the rhetoric of redistricting. Contains a 50-item bibliography. (NKA)

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by David M. Lucas

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The Rhetoric of Redistricting: Ohio's Altered State

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Introduction

As the population of the United States grows and shifts in one state or another, the number of congressional representatives in these states may be changed by mandate of the federal government through the decennial census. The first census, completed in the early 1990's, provided information and population statistics demonstrating that the state of Ohio's population declined. As a result, the state of Ohio lost two congressional seats (Pease, 2002).

Once again, in the 2000 census, statistics demonstrated that Ohio's population remained in slow growth mode in comparison to other states and Ohio lost another seat in congress. An editorial in the Cincinnati Post revealed, "It's not because Ohio lost population. Ohio grew by 4.7 percent since 1990. Ohio remains the 7th largest state in the Union. Yet Ohio, much like other parts of the Midwest and Northwest, has not shown the growth like other parts of the country. Because the states in the West and South showed double-digit growth, and since Congress has a fixed number of seats, Ohio continued to lose congressional representation" (Cincinnati Post, 2000). This caused "Ohio

politicians to grab every opportunity to seek ways to run in different regions because of the new district lines" (Pease, 2002).

Once the number of congressional seats for Ohio had been declared by the federal formula, the Ohio General Assembly drafted a piece of legislation allowing for the redrawing the boundaries of the various congressional districts throughout the state. This plan must pass both houses (House and Senate) and then must be signed by the Governor.

The regulations guiding this process of reapportionment or redistricting are somewhat vague and uncertain constraints. For example, the districts must be:

1) roughly equal in population
2) they cannot be proven to discriminate against racial minorities
3) they are required to be reasonably compact
4) keep all of one city or village in the same district
5) make up or take some reasonable shape (McCarthy, Ohio Remapping, Associated Press, 2001).

In Ohio, the state legislature is required, after each Census, to redraw the congressional boundaries. Even though computer technology exists and makes possible the drafting of unbiased boundaries and appropriate parameters for an acceptable boundaries map, legislation in Ohio has thus far refused to capitulate their control over this very political process. The Cincinnati Post concludes that "in a more perfect

world, partisan advantage would be a remote consideration in Ohio's congressional map-making process. But, due to status quo politics, such considerations are not even entertained. As it stands, however, congressional redistricting has grown into one of the most overtly political acts in the Ohio General Assembly. In fact, most congressional elections for the next 10 years will be decided through the redistricting maneuver of the Ohio General Assembly as the power brokers redraw the boundaries of congressional districts" (Cincinnati Post, 2002).

The implications of this reapportionment mandate became abundantly clear:

1. Ohio loses clout in Washington with less representation.
2. Congressional representatives must work harder in order to serve their specified regions.
3. "The Census starts the music for a wary dance that will end with some incumbents losing their seats" (Cincinnati Post, 2000).
4. Political rhetoric becomes polarized and filled with ***Illusionisms***.
5. Political metaphors abound in the speeches, electronic, and print media.

"This changing of the boundaries presents an opportunity for certain mischief. Such a situation has the potential to produce grotesquely gerrymandered districts in Ohio" (Cincinnati Post, 2002). This ominous prediction came to pass as the Ohio Legislature redesigned several congressional districts but one in particular, Ohio's sixth district, "will now stretch from the western portion of Scioto County, through the counties along the Ohio River, up to Mahoning County. The district

becomes a 325 mile long political nightmare" (Jenkins, Ohio University Post, 2002). The State of Ohio serves as the canvas, politicians control the brush strokes, and political rhetoric serves as the paint. The rest of the public can only buy entrance tickets to view the creative artwork.

An event such as congressional boundary redistricting, so ripe with political confrontation, provides a fertile field for the profuse growth of political rhetoric (Broder, The Washington Post, 2000). The traditional two party political system, charged by the two well-developed adversarial philosophies, generates a highly charged environment with messages begging for analysis. For this unusual event, however, gerrymandering works as the engine propelling the rhetoric in the state legislature debates, political speeches, the journalism, and the general discussions.

After numerous attempts at using existing political rhetorical theories to analyze the rhetoric resulting from Ohio's reapportionment maneuvers, all seemed woefully inadequate to provide the proper framework for this particular situation and this study. The necessity for a suitable theory resulted in the production, the design, and the emergence of a new political communication theory providing sufficient framework to analyze the unique rhetoric of redistricting. This theory is called *Rhetorical Illusionism* (Lucas, 2002).

The Theory

The communication theory applied to the rhetoric of Ohio's redistricting in this study is entitled *Rhetorical Illusionism.* Accepting

Aristotle's assumption that rhetoric is a communication art form, this theory rests on the same principles set forth by the famed Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer, the noted *illusionism* artist (Aristotle, The Rhetoric, Wheelock, 1995). In his book on the artistic genius of Vermeer, Wheelock wrote, "The symbolic association to history and fame are only part of Vermeer's allegory of art. For Vermeer, painting meant more than conveying abstract principles. He held the conviction that an artist needed a thorough understanding of the laws of nature in order to create a convincing illusion of reality. Such is the seductive beauty of his paintings that their subtle artifice often goes completely unnoticed" (Wheelock, 1995).

This artistic tool, illusionism, has direct application to the art of rhetoric, and more specifically to the rhetoric of redistricting. Political rhetoric is comprised of more elements than just conveying abstract principles. As in Vermeer's illusionism, this political rhetoric "is designed to give an image and a sense of life through masterful observation, use of light, rules of linear perspectives, and learning how to direct the viewer's eye toward the object of prominence in the composition" (Wheelock, 1995). The seven fundamentals of Vermeer's illusionism and the corresponding seven fundamental principles of rhetorical illusionism consist of:

1) *Illuminate only essential figures and objects* intended to construct the message.

2) Give the message the *appearance of credible power and space*, delivering only the important components.
3) Locate the *vanishing point* by directing the viewer's eye toward only the prominent images in the composition.
4) Convey optical effects through changing areas of focus, or in other words, employ an *optical diffusion effect.*
5) Use heavy folds, colors, textures, highlights, and weaves to amuse, mirror, and *deceive the viewer as to reality.* Vermeer calls this *symbolic masking*, providing imitation, pretense, and personification.
6) Maintain an *air of mystery* through the presentation of idealized reality thereby achieving a sense of permanence and timelessness.
7) Present a compelling yet *ambiguous relationship* between the real and the allegorical.

These seven components provide the framework for the construction of the *rhetorical illusionism theory.* The intention of this paper is to present the rhetoric of Ohio's redistricting analyzed through this theory.

Illuminate Only Essential Figures and Objects

Every ten years, following the national census, the Ohio Legislature is charged with redrawing the geographic boundaries of each of the state's U. S. House of Representative districts to reflect a gain or loss of population as well as population shifts within the state or the nation. The

2000 national census confirmed what many Ohio officials anticipated...the state would lose one of its 19 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. In the November 2002 elections, Ohioans will elect 18 members of Congress to the House, reflecting a net loss of six Ohio seats since 1971 (Gongwer News Service, 2002).

For the Ohio voters, this means that the trip to the polls in 2002 may reveal that they have moved to a new congressional district "without selling the house or moving a stick of furniture" (Wilkinson, Cincy Enquirer, 2000). Congressional redistricting is done by the state legislature, which is controlled by the Republican Party. In reality, "redistricting determines the future control of the Congress. It is very disconcerting for members of Congress to realize that their futures rest in the hands of a few hundred state legislators that they many not even know" (Mack, 2001). "The legislators determine the political landscape in at least the first decade of the new millennium. These are the people who preside over the process of reapportionment and redistricting in their respective states. In essence, they elect Congress, not the voters" (Hill, 2002). "The way the legislators draw the lines in the state really controls or directs the advocacy of the representative" (Hill, 2001).

> "If that sounds a little backwards to you because you seem to remember from your high school civics class that it's the voters who are supposed to do the picking, then you must have snoozed through the lesson on Elbridge Gerry.
>
> Mr. Gerry was one of our founding fathers—signer of the Declaration, ambassador to France, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and vice president under James Madison. But it was

> as governor of Massachusetts in 1811 that he gained immortal fame (or notoriety) by lending his name to the politically elastic practice known today as '*gerrymandering.*'
> '*Gerrymandering*' is the redrawing of political boundaries by the majority party to keep one type of voter in a district or another out. In Mr. Gerry's case, it involved the creation of a Massachusetts' district so misshapen that someone said it looked like a salamander. A wise guy commentator renamed it a "gerrymander." Gerrymandering has a long bipartisan tradition (Wells, 2002).

The political power brokers create the illusion that voters actually have the power to choose on Election Day. By focusing on the rhetoric of democracy and avoiding illumination of the fact that "gerrymandering is discriminatory districting: discrimination in favor of, or against, one political party or the other" (Wells, 2002), the power brokers redirect the focus and highlight the attention on only what they want the audience to notice. Certainly, they "avoid revealing that racial groups, ethnic groups, or individual candidates lose legitimate representation by this shamefully political action" (O'Neill, 2001).

All of this effort, energy, and comments are focused on the essentials for constructing the message that the census causes the need for the redistricting. In this case, what is omitted is more interesting than what is included in the rhetoric. New technologies, equitable strategies, or careful planning could all change the manner in which states reapportion. Yet the political maneuvering continues. The politicians from both political parties resist changing the practice. The message, then, is so engineered as to not even hint that there are alternatives.

Instead, the powers in charge merely focus on the essential: Ohio must redistrict according to law and tradition.

Appearance of credible power and space

Ohio Republican politicians crafted a symbolic framework to present a message with an appearance of credible power and space for inclusion and input. Voters like to *feel* like they have significance and relevance. Therefore, in August of 2001, "Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell and Senate President Richard Finan announced the creation of a Web site where Ohioans will be able to design their own state legislative districts, making the reapportionment and redistricting processes the most 'open' and 'accessible' in Ohio history" (Hershey, 2001). The "open and accessible plan" included three basic elements:

1) A Web site explaining how legislative reapportionment and congressional districting works. Included was an online form for requesting a CD-ROM with population data and mapping software to be used by Ohioans for "designing their own districts" (Hershey, 2001). Voters were supposedly able to download this material directly, but it took more than two hours to download the data (Hershey, 2001).
2) In addition to the Web site, 10 regional remapping centers were opened throughout the state where the public could use high-speed computers and map-making software. Separate public awareness announcements were to be made when the centers

were ready for public use, according to Carlo LoParo, Blackwell's spokesperson.

3) The CD-ROM supposedly allowed Ohioans to draft their ideas, proposals, and designs to the office of Ohio's Secretary of State so that the voter's plans and suggestions could be used. No announcement was made, however, as to exactly how the suggestions or proposals would be included in the discussions or planning by the State leaders.

The Secretary's announcements came in mid-August, but the CD software was not available until September 2001. Oddly enough, the plan for redistricting had to be completed by a deadline of October 5, 2001. In retrospect, four identifiable problems obstructed the plans and prevented this from being an open or accessible process.

1) The ten high-speed access or remapping centers announced publicly were, in reality, various County Board of Elections sites, which are controlled by the Secretary of State. Usually, one computer was set up in a corner of the various boards of election offices to allow citizens the opportunity to provide their input into the redistricting process. There were no new or special access centers set up or opened for this process.

2) The redistricting software was difficult if not virtually impossible to download from the Web site.
3) The promised, completed CD-ROM came available in mid-September, practically too late for any significant input from the general public.
4) After the CD-ROM software became available, many requests for the software went unfilled and, in the State of Ohio at the time, only 50 % of the state's population owned a computer and only 41% of those who owned computers had access to Internet connections in order to fill out the online request form (US Department of Commerce).

This plan gave the general public in Ohio the perception of Internet access centers, but in reality Blackwell's people dropped a computer on a desk in ten different County Board of Elections offices. The Ohioans heard illusions of empowerment, inclusion, and involvement through an open and accessible process, when in reality, less than 50% of the state's population could have participated in this plan and only 41% of that group could have actually accessed the information online. The State legislators in general, and Blackwell in particular, painted a complete canvas with an illusion of power and space.

Vanishing point

In one of Vermeer's painting, "he located the vanishing point just in front of the figure of Clio, directing the viewer's eye toward her giving her greater prominence in the composition" (Wheelock, 1995). These same principles in Vermeer's artwork also fit well with the art of rhetoric. In the case of the rhetoric of redistricting, the painters create several *vanishing points* in order to direct the voter's eye toward another topic by giving it greater prominence in the rhetorical discussion and message.

For example, the Web site address created especially for the redistricting and reapportionment was www.ohioremap2001.org. Yet, only a few days after the deadline for the submission of voters' suggestions, the Web site *vanished*. No follow up announcements about the input from the high speed, remapping computer centers or any results of voters' suggestions ever emerged or were published. The entire project seemed to *vanish* along with the Web site.

The Ohio Secretary of State, Kenneth Blackwell, and his staff recommended "Ohioans complete an online form on the Web site in order to request a CD-ROM with population data and mapping software to be used in designing *their own districts*" (Hershey, 2001). Yet, a cursory look at the results of Ohio's redistricting would reveal that at least one of the redesigned districts in Ohio emerged from this process grossly misshapen (The Post, 2002). No state official suggesting that voters designed this highly irregular district has ever come forward.

Additionally, the promised CD-ROM *vanished* just as quickly. As previously mentioned, the window of access in the timetable of the redistricting process for voter input was roughly one month. The author requested a copy of the CD-ROM twelve different times. The 'online' form was filed, and, after two weeks, when no CD-ROM appeared, the author then followed up the request in the form of several e-mail requests, letter requests, and phone call requests. No copy of the software ever arrived. The ultimate acquisition of the author's copy of the CD-ROM came from a political activist friend who seems to have the ability to get in the middle of most of Ohio's political forays. In any event, the author's copy of the CD came through unconventional means and not through the published channels. The CD-ROM seems to have *vanished* along with the Web site, the remapping centers, and the voters' designed districts.

Along with CD-ROMs, Web sites, and remapping centers, the power of the citizen's vote *vanished* in this process. Consider this comment found in an essay from the Dayton Daily News:

> In Ohio, there's no way to know whether the Republicans will propose an unusually unseemly power grab or just the normal political gamesmanship. What everybody should understand, though, is that what's happening behind closed doors is the heart of the congressional election process.
>
> When map drawers are done, they generally don't leave many districts up for grabs. They draw the lines so most districts are Republican or Democratic, period. The general elections too often amount to mere ceremony.
>
> The politicians don't have this kind of power outside of legislative elections. In other circumstances, they can't easily shift the borders of cities, counties, states or the nation. But in this instance, in these elections for Congress and state legislatures, they exercise enormous power once every 10 years. In Ohio, the

> process ought to be a lot more open than it has been so far (Dayton News Editorial).

Consider this quote from the Cincinnati Enquirer:

> Because the Republican-controlled Ohio General Assembly will wield the pencil that will draw the new congressional district lines, at least one of Ohio's eight Democratic U.S. House members will find that his district no longer exists by the time the 2002 election comes along (Wilkinson).

The power of the voter *vanishes* in this process, along with the Web site, the CD-ROM, the promised 'open process,' and the 'high speed computer remapping centers.' No result of citizens' input ever became apparent or was ever announced. Surely Vermeer would be proud of these political painters.

Optical diffusion effect

In many of his paintings, Vermeer conveyed an interesting unfocused effect known as a "diffused focused optical effect" (Wheelock, 1995). In his painting entitled *Girl with the Red Hat*, Vermeer used an "unfocused appearance of an image executed with remarkable spontaneity and informality with some areas in clearer focus than others" (Montias, 1989). Vermeer guided the audience's eyes to the focused areas and obscured the more remote areas. About Vermeer's artwork, Samuel van Hoogstraten wrote, "A perfect painting is like a mirror of Nature, in which things that are not there appear to be there, and which deceives in an acceptable, amusing, and praiseworthy fashion" (Chapman, 1997).

In similar fashion, state leaders generally and the Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell in particular suggested that "Ohioans complete an online form on a special Web site requesting a CD-ROM with population data and mapping software to be used in designing their own districts" (Dayton Daily News, 2001). Citizens could also "download the material directly but it would take about two hours" (Dayton Daily News, 2001). Yet, in later in the very same article, Hershey writes, "the state apportionment board, controlled 4-1 by Republicans, decides the new boundaries. Congressional redistricting is done by Governor Bob Taft and the legislature, also Republican-controlled" (Dayton Daily News, 2001).

This rhetoric focused on the citizen designing a redistricting map with the new remapping software and the opportunity for downloading the innovative data. Yet, on the fringes or unfocused edges, state leaders made an acknowledgement that little time remained for citizen input and that the downloading was difficult, at best. Also, Blackwell acknowledged in an obscure way that at the time of the announcement of the redistricting design process software that "the data and software and the CDs containing them won't be available for about two weeks" (Hershey). This delay would throw the citizen's accessibility to the data set into September. Again, in the same article, the staff for the Ohio Secretary of State nonchalantly announced that the remapping suggestions had to be sent to the redistricting committee before their next meeting and that

"the board's next meeting is September 24" (Hershey, 2001). Such a limited time window gave little time for anyone to construct a new plan for Ohio voting districts. The emphasis on the participation of citizens blurred the fact that the citizens had little chance to get their plans to the right people by the deadline. Blackwell, in announcing this new data remapping process, said, " this makes the reapportionment and redistricting processes the most 'open' and 'accessible' in Ohio history."

If, indeed, this was the most open and accessible opportunity for Ohio citizens to participate in the reapportionment process, then the previous instances held no possibility of participation. The software was cumbersome; little time was allowed for Ohioans to construct their voting districts; virtually no time remained from the time of the announcement of the availability of the software to the deadline for proposed changes; no clear descriptions as to how the citizens' remapping plans would be used (or even if the plans would be used); and no announcements or further information concerning the impact the citizen input followed the revelation of final results of plans for the redrawn districts. The actual citizens' plans and suggestions blurred into obscurity while the focus remained on a new software program, an open and accessible process, and a promise that citizens could participate in an otherwise very obscure, closed, and inaccessible, but politically important, event.

Symbolic Masking

Returning to Vermeer's painting style, "he departed radically from the traditions, breathing new life into the coded language of allegory and presenting the symbolic mask as a studio prop left casually on the table" (Wheelock). Vermeer accents his illusionism symbolically by the use of a mask. This "established a symbol of imitation and the attribute given to the personification" (Wheelock, 1995).

Masks and the principles of masking have always been important in theatre, dance, and cultural art. Yet, politicians and state leaders proclaim their adherence to truth. Consider these statements found on the Web site of Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell:

> "The Web site utilizes technology to provide open access to a very important part of our democracy. I encourage all Ohioans to log onto the Web site to learn more about reapportionment and redistricting, and participate in the process. The Web site opens reapportionment to citizens by providing direct access to the census data and software necessary for re-mapping. Using these tools, anyone can design their own map of legislative district boundaries and submit it for consideration to the Secretary of State's Apportionment Office" (Sec. Of State Web site: www.ohioremap2001.org).

The interesting and operational rhetoric here are messages such as "provide open access to participate in our democracy; participate in the process; and anyone can participate in the design of their own map of legislative district boundaries (www.ohioremap2001.org)." In one sense, all of these statements may carry some measure of reality. Yet, in the greater sense, this is only a mask over the greater truth. The process is

not democracy in progress. In reality, "all the important discussions and decisions are made behind closed doors" (Dayton Daily News, 2001). And, therefore, "what's happening behind these closed doors is the heart of the congressional process. When the map designers are done, they generally don't leave many districts up for grabs. They draw the lines so most districts are Republican or Democratic, period. The general elections too often amount to mere ceremony" (Dayton Daily News, 2001).

According to Wheelock, "the mimetic power of Vermeer's painting is embodied clearly in its strong illusionism, but he also refers to it symbolically. The mask establishes a symbol of imitation and an attribute of personification" (Wheelock, Vermeer, Washington Post, 1995). The rhetorical mask allows politicians to speak with a veneer of truth, yet proceed with a set, sometimes completely hidden, agenda. The mask of participation, access, and openness symbolically covers the reality of preconceived and preplanned electoral results achieved through a manipulation of the system. The rhetorical mask covers up the face of truth.

Air of mystery

Vermeer successfully constructed space, a sense of texture in objects, and naturalistically rendered light effects that draw the viewer into the world of illusionism (Wheelock, 1995). Yet, using the technique of *illusionism*, he constructs components of the powerfully evocative

character of his interiors. There is an *air of mystery* to them (Wheelock, 1995).

There emerged an *air of mystery* to the rhetoric of redistricting in Ohio, also. Beside the claims of openness, accessibility, and inclusion of the citizens in the processes, legislatures also spoke of the possibility of a second primary, threatened lawsuits, and racial discrimination. The entire process, from the census taking to the announcement of redistricting, appears laden with mysterious twists and turns. Therefore, "every 10 years, the release of census numbers means that state legislative caucuses, political parties, and other interest groups with a stake in the outcome hire number-crunchers, map-drawers, and political scientists to come up with a new political map for both the state and federal legislatures" (Wilkinson, 2002). Additionally, "this process gets the attention, too, of the U.S. House members and state legislators who could find themselves out of a job if their district lines change too drastically" (Wilkinson, 2002).

The mystery of redistricting only deepened as Ohio officials made the claim that citizens could participate in the process. The proposition that citizens could draw their own maps and determine voting districts would seem perfectly logical in a democratic social structure. The mystery continues, however, as a few political gatekeepers exercised powerful geographic artistry that will affect elections in Ohio for many years to come. The gatekeepers scourer over voter statistics, set voter

blocks, and create new districts to best serve the party in power. Why this process is allowed to continue may be the greatest mystery of all.

Ambiguous relationship

Vermeer perfected the technique of illusionism by "modifying and idealizing reality to achieve a sense of permanence and timelessness" (Sluijter, 1998). Such a technique makes art enthusiasts reach out their hands attempting to lift curtains in Vermeer's paintings. "In his work, there is a compelling yet ambiguous relationship between the real and the allegorical" (Sluijter, 1998). To become a master illusionist, the artist must create a sense of reality by building a descriptive, symbolic representation of life in the abstract.

"Political language depends upon ambiguity because politicians need the ability to place their own interpretations on what they have said, to deny others' interpretations, to change their emphases without changing their words, to allow their audience members to hold different interpretations simultaneously without offending those who hold any one interpretation, and perhaps for other reasons yet to be identified." (Hahn, 1998) Politicians employ ambiguous phrases even when talking with each other. Tolchin maintains "that ambiguous phrases allow politicians to imply agreement without making a commitment, always leaving open the possibility of later voting some other way without being accused of changing positions or being inconsistent" (Tolchin, 1984).

Blackwell and his staff never announced exactly how any of the citizen remapping proposals would be used. By law, the decision makers were never bound to use any of the citizen suggestions nor were they ever bound to even request their input. Therefore, the state leaders could safely ask for the citizen participation, yet never face the need to stand accountable for suggestions, ideas, or plans submitted by participants.

The ultimate results of the redistricting design did not seem to provide the advantage to the Republican Party as initially thought, however. "Although the Ohio remap results threw some individual Democrats into a tailspin, House Democrats expressed overall satisfaction with a plan they said could have eliminated two or three Democratic House seats" (Mercurio, Clillizza, 2002). The Ohio redistricting play actually emerged as "another major setback to Republican leaders who had hoped that redistricting could somehow ensure their thin majority" (Mercurio, Clillizza, 2002). If the Republicans, who held the reigns of the redistricting team, could not engineer a satisfactory remapping of Ohio then the whole process seems to be a complete exercise in futility. The results in Ohio were certainly ambiguous.

Conclusion

Ohio voters faced a curious proposition during the fall of 2001. Political leaders in power offered to let interested citizens participate in the remapping of the voting districts of Ohio. The most recent census

had revealed that the population of the state had dropped and therefore the state of Ohio had to realign voting representation. The political tradition of gerrymandering would once again plague the state of Ohio.

In this particular instance, state leaders presented the illusion that voters could participate in the redistricting process by accessing computer software that would allow the citizen to review the population data and suggest ways in which the state could be redrawn fairly. Yet, less than half of the homes in Ohio had access to the Internet. The leaders offered only a limited amount of time for the votes to submit their recommendations, and voters were expected to seek out a computer at the election offices or endure a two hour download wait for the software. In all of this, no guarantee or process was ever announced to ensure that the proposals would ever be considered.

The artistic principles of the famous artist Vermeer, known as illusionism, provide a fitting framework and process for analysis of the rhetoric of redistricting in Ohio. Vermeer's work followed seven principles that include:

1) *essential figures and objects*
2) *an appearance of credible power and space*
3) *vanishing points*
4) *optical diffusion effects*
5) *deception of the viewer as to the reality*
6) *an air of mystery*

7) *an ambiguous set of relationships*

The same principles serve as the foundation principles for the theory of rhetorical illusionism. The theory allows the analysis of the rhetoric surrounding the process of redistricting and provides insights into the construction of the message and motivations of the various speakers.

Most politicians and political analysts agree that "Redistricting is the arcane but critically important process of drawing lines for the political battlegrounds of this new century" (Broder, 2000). What they seldom seem to agree upon is the way in which the districts and/or the state should be altered. In the end, however, only a few specially placed individuals get to draw the political map for the future elections in the state of Ohio. The rest of the people make up the audience standing in the wings, looking up at the focused and obscure, guessing at what all of this could mean. The artwork is created by the technique of *rhetorical illusionism.*

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